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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0691
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000903

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER JERUSALEM PLC MEMBER ASSESSES HAMAS, ABU MAZEN'S NEXT STEPS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a March 2 meeting with ConGen Poloff, former Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Ziad Abu Zayyad (Jerusalem, independent) provided his assessment of the challenges confronting the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the new PLC. On Hamas forming the next Palestinian government, Abu Zayyad labeled the possibility of Fatah participation in a National Unity Government (NUG) a mistake, arguing that Hamas should be "put to the test" to gauge their true positions. Abu Zayyad said that PA President Abbas (Abu Mazen) was inclined to let Hamas take over the PA, including control of the PA security services, in order to test Hamas intentions and avoid potential charges of interference if Hamas fails at the attempt. Abu Zayyad described the incoming Hamas PLC members as inexperienced and generally nave about the challenges that they would face running the PA. On Fatah, Abu Zayyad said that the movement lacked a "charismatic" leader to lead it out of its present crisis. End summary.

Abu Zayyad: Put
Hamas to The Test

¶2. (C) Ziad Abu Zayyad, who failed in his bid for re-election to the PLC in the January 25 elections, provided ConGen Poloff an assessment of Hamas' efforts to form the next Palestinian government. Abu Zayyad thought that Fatah should not participate in a NUG with Hamas. Instead, Hamas should be forced to stand alone in the government, which would compel the movement to either adapt to existing political realities or fail altogether. Hamas had committed itself to a role in Palestinian politics once it chose to run in the PLC elections. Therefore, it shouldn't be allowed to skirt those responsibilities, or, use Fatah as political cover in a NUG. In his estimation, Hamas was still acting as if it was an opposition movement rather than the majority faction in the PLC.

¶3. (C) Abu Zayyad outlined three possible courses of action for a Hamas-led government, namely:

-- Hamas maintains a hard-line policy, including no change to its charter calling for Israel's destruction. Abu Zayyad thought that Hamas would nevertheless seek arrangements to establish a long-term truce with Israel. Under this scenario, Abu Zayyad thought that a hard-line government would survive no longer than a few months to a year.

-- Hamas commits to change, albeit slowly. This scenario was unlikely to produce positive responses from either Israel or the international community.

-- Hamas changes its positions on Israel and negotiations. Under this scenario, Israel would be compelled to respond positively to Hamas overtures. Abu Zayyad thought that chances were remote that Hamas would follow this scenario.

Hamas Showing its
Inexperience in the PLC

¶4. (C) Abu Zayyad described Hamas PLC members as inexperienced and generally nave about the challenges facing it in the Council. He criticized Hamas for selecting only Hamas PLC members to leadership positions in the PLC. Some of those positions should have been set aside for Fatah and other factions in the Council, just as Fatah had done in the previous Council. Abu Zayyad suggested that Hamas was treating the Council as if it were another Hamas institution.

Abu Mazen Inclined to
Let Hamas Run the PA

¶5. (C) Abu Zayyad judged that the PA President was trying to pressure Hamas in a positive way that avoids a confrontation. Abu Mazen, who was sensitive to Palestinian public opinion, is inclined to let Hamas fail on its own without having Abu Mazen blamed for its failure. Abu Zayyad expected Abu Mazen to give control of the security forces over to Hamas. According to Abu Zayyad, Abu Mazen was committed to his political program, as outlined in his February 18 speech to the PLC. He estimated that Abu Mazen would only call for new elections -- PLC and presidential -- if Hamas agreed that it can no longer govern.

Fatah Facing

Internal Problems

¶6. (C) Abu Zayyad said that Fatah's internal problems stemmed in part from the absence of a "charismatic" leader who could impose political order on the movement. Abu Mazen lacks the personal traits to fill that role, he said. Senior leaders in the Fatah Central Committee and in the Revolutionary Council are also unwilling to relinquish power. Abu Zayyad expected further postponements in the holding of the Sixth Fatah Congress. Abu Zayyad described a contentious relationship between Abu Mazen and Fatah's General Secretary Farouq Qaddummi, who technically outranks Abu Mazen within the Fatah leadership structure.

WALLES